

those receipts are going to be at record levels and very close to, as a percent of the economy, where they were before the 2017 tax reform.

What we should take away from these findings is that the economy is growing as we come out of this pandemic. We know this to be true. We have known it for months, really.

The Congressional Budget Office projected way back in January that without any additional government help—no new COVID-19 packages, not including the \$1.9 trillion spending package that Congress passed in March—that the economy would fully recover by midyear. And they were right, even as much of that spending has not gone out yet from the \$1.9 trillion.

Payroll tax revenue has risen by about 4 percent, suggesting that workers are taking home bigger paychecks than before.

So the economy is beginning a nice recovery. We need it to continue. The last thing you want to do is to slap a bunch of taxes on the economy right now and have the economy go down and have workers, in particular, bear the brunt of that.

My question is: Why would you want to throw out a tax code that has helped fuel this unprecedented economic recovery we saw prepandemic and brought in more money in the process?

In 2017, with this tax reform, we helped usher in an economy powered by workers and powered by small businesses and powered by more competitive larger businesses. It wasn't powered by big spending here in Washington, DC. The results worked. It was truly historic.

Moving ahead, let's stay the course instead of hiking taxes and putting a damper on American prosperity and American opportunity for everybody to get ahead. A massive tax increase won't make us build back better. A massive tax increase will tear down what makes us better.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

#### FREEDOM TO VOTE ACT

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak in support of very important new legislation, the Freedom to Vote Act, that I introduced yesterday with the members of the Voting Rights Working Group assembled by Leader SCHUMER, which includes Senator MANCHIN; Senator MERKLEY, who is here with us today on the floor and who has been such a leader on voting issues, including the For the People Act; Senator PADILLA; and Senators KING, KAINE, TESTER, and WARNOCK.

The freedom to vote is fundamental to all of our freedoms. Following the 2020 elections in which more Americans voted than ever before, in the middle of a public health crisis, we have seen unprecedented attacks on our democracy in States across the country. These attacks demand an immediate Federal response.

The Freedom to Vote Act will set basic national standards to make sure all Americans can cast their ballots in the way that works best for them, regardless of what ZIP Code they live in.

I want to thank Senator SCHUMER for his leadership in pulling together our working group that got this legislation across the finish line and, as I mentioned, Senators MERKLEY and MANCHIN for their work on this crucial bill.

It has been over 8 months since that violent mob of insurrectionists stormed through this very spot and desecrated our Capitol, the temple of our democracy. They opened the desks in this Chamber. They got up and sat at that desk where you are sitting now, Mr. President. It was an attack on our Republic.

And as I said from the inaugural stage just 2 weeks later under that beautiful blue sky, at the very place where you could still see the spray paint at the bottom of the columns and the makeshift windows behind us, "This is the day our democracy picks itself up, brushes off the dust, and does what America always does: goes forward as a nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

We took back our democracy that day with Democrats, Republicans, and Independents all sitting at that platform, seeing a new President and Vice President be inaugurated. We took back our democracy that day, and we will take it back this day with this new bill, with the support of 78 percent of Americans who favor 2 weeks of early voting, a very important provision in this bill, and 83 percent of voters who support public disclosures of all contributions. We will take it back again from those who are trying to take away people's constitutional right to vote.

With over 400 bills introduced in nearly every State to limit the freedom to vote, we can't simply sit back and watch our democracy be threatened again. Whether it is threatened with bear spray and crowbars and axes or long lines or the elimination of ballot boxes or the secret money, it is still under siege. When we are faced with a coordinated effort across the country to limit the freedom to vote, we must stand up and do what is right.

Sometimes people say: What is going on? It worked so well during the pandemic, during a public health crisis. More people voted than ever before.

Well, that is because they voted by mail. That is because some States, both blue States and red States, changed their laws to make it easier to vote, while still protecting the sanctity of the vote.

So why is this happening? Well, I think our colleague Senator Rev. RAPHAEL WARNOCK put it best when he said: "Some people don't want some people to vote." We will not stand for that because that is not how a democracy works.

Leader SCHUMER has said he will bring this new bill to a vote as soon as

next week because we know our democracy cannot wait. This bill builds on the framework put forward by Senator MANCHIN in June and includes many of the key reforms in the For the People Act, guaranteeing all Americans, as I noted, access to at least 15 days of early voting, including weekends.

Look at what just happened in Georgia. We just had a field hearing down there with the Rules Committee. In Georgia, all of a sudden they passed a law that says, yeah, you can vote on weekends early on, but when it counts in a runoff period, in those last 28 days, you can't vote on weekends anymore. That is only done for one reason: to make it harder for people to vote. That is why this bill is so important.

What else does it do? It ensures that all voters can cast a mail-in ballot and makes it easier to register to vote. That is pretty important as we see Republican, Democrat, and Independent voters all across this country wanting to be able to cast mail-in ballots. It is the safest way for so many of them to vote, even today.

Some States even required them to get a notary signature in the middle of a pandemic, through a glass window, when they were in the hospital. You wonder why we want to have some Federal minimum standards in place.

What else? Increased transparency through the DISCLOSE Act. I already noted that over 80 percent of people in this country want to see that, whether they are Democrats, Republicans, or Independents. It would require super-PACs and issue advocacy groups to disclose donors who contribute more than \$10,000 and stop the use of transfers between organizations to cloak the identity, to hide the identity of the source of those contributions.

It would counter partisan interference in election administration and protect election officials because not only do we need to make sure people can vote, we need to make sure their vote is counted.

It would prevent voter purges by requiring States to use objective and reliable evidence to remove voters and prohibit the targeting of voters solely because they haven't voted recently, while giving election administrators flexibility to remove voters based on State records.

As Stacey Abrams has said, if you don't go to a meeting for a while, do you lose your right to assemble? No, you don't. If you don't go to a church or a synagogue or a mosque for a while, do you lose your right to exercise your right to religion? No, you don't. You shouldn't lose your right to vote.

It would also prohibit partisan gerrymandering, this bill will, so that voters choose their elected officials, not the other way around.

Now, my home State of Minnesota is a great example of how this can all work. When you make it easier for people to vote, they will vote. I never see this as a partisan issue.

In election after election, our State leads the Nation in voter turnout because we have things like, now, no-excuse voting by mail or 46 days of early voting. Our bill doesn't go that far because we are setting minimum standards, but that is what we have in our State—and same-day voter registration.

And what has happened as a result? High voter turnout every time. Whom have we elected? Well, we have elected Democratic Governors like our Governor, Tim Walz; we have elected Republican Governors like Tim Pawlenty; and we have elected Independents like Jesse Ventura. But what have I noticed? People feel like they are part of the democracy because we make it easier for them to vote.

These policies that ensure Minnesotans continue to hold the coveted title of first in voter turnout—very close to the Presiding Officer's State of Colorado—are overseen by our secretary of state, Steve Simon, who continues to push for improvements in our elections.

The freedom to vote is fundamental to all our freedoms. Protecting it has not always been easy. Throughout our country's 245-year history, we have had to course correct and take action to ensure that our democracy for the people, by the people actually lives up to its ideals.

Voting is how Americans control their government and hold elected officials accountable. It was the founding principle of our country, and it has stood the test of wars, economic strife, and a global pandemic. But as we have seen in States like Georgia, Florida, Iowa, Montana, and most recently Texas, we are up against a coordinated attack aimed at limiting the freedom to vote. This demands a Federal response.

And the Constitution could not be clearer. It says right there that Congress can make or alter laws regarding Federal elections.

Just last week, legislation in Texas was signed into law that makes it harder to vote, and many States already are underway drawing new congressional maps. Without this bill, there will be nothing to limit many States from drawing gerrymandered maps that will distort the voices of Americans not just for 1 year but for the next decade.

The urgency for a Federal response is why, as chairwoman of the Senate Rules Committee, I have worked to ensure that voting rights are a priority. It is why one of our first hearings this year was on the For the People Act and why—and I see Reverend Warnock here—we took the Rules Committee on the road to Georgia in its first field hearing in 20 years.

And just last month, Senator BALDWIN and I held a roundtable discussion in Wisconsin on what has been happening in that State and what would have been put into law, including only having one ballot dropoff box in the en-

tire city of Milwaukee if the Governor hadn't stood in and vetoed it.

And we are not done yet because these discussions with voters are the most pressing testament that the threat to the freedom to vote is very real and affecting people of all walks of life across the country. We can't sit back idly and watch our democracy be threatened. As President Biden said in Philadelphia, the fight to protect the right to vote is the "test of our time."

Americans have fought and died to protect this freedom, and 56 years after the Voting Rights Act was passed by this Chamber and signed into law, we are still continuing this fight.

We have asked our colleagues from the other side of the aisle to join us on this bill. We have made many, many, many changes to this legislation in response to concerns they have raised, in response to concerns Senator MANCHIN raised, in response to concerns that secretaries of state have made across the country. We have adapted this bill to make it much easier to implement in rural areas, in small towns.

We are proud of this legislation. Yet what do we hear from the other side of the aisle? Well, over the last few months, one of their refrains which I find so amusing is they say this will somehow result in chaos. Truly?

Chaos is a 5-hour wait to vote in the Sun in Georgia without food or water. Chaos is purging eligible voters from voter rolls and prohibiting mail-in ballot drop boxes and having only one in the entirety of Harris County in Texas for 5 million people. Chaos is voters in Wisconsin waiting in line to vote for hours in the rain, wearing homemade face masks and plastic garbage bags. That angry mob on January 6 that came right into this Chamber, that was chaos.

You want to stop the chaos: Federal minimum voting standards. Telling extremists they can't spend millions on sham audits, that stops the chaos. Getting dark money out of our politics, that stops the chaos. And making sure that people have a voice by ending partisan gerrymandering, that stops the chaos.

So, once again, I urge my Republican colleagues to recognize the work being done in many of their own States to restrict the freedom of Americans to exercise their sacred right to vote. Our Nation was founded on the ideals of democracy, and as we have seen for ourselves in this very building, we cannot afford to take it for granted.

We have so much work to do. Voting rights reform, this bill, guaranteeing the freedom to vote, is about the salvation of our very democracy. I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting the Freedom to Vote Act.

Mr. President, I see my colleagues. Senator MERKLEY, such a great leader on the For the People bill, and Senator WARNOCK, such a great leader, new in the Senate but already establishing himself across the country and in Georgia as a leader on voting rights, are both here.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I so much appreciate the words of my colleague from Minnesota, who has brought the Rules Committee to bear in a maximum capacity to fight to defend the freedom to vote for all Americans.

When I was in high school, I had the opportunity to live in West Africa under a dictatorship as an exchange student. And in that country, the military dictatorship would exist until there was a new military coup, and then there would be another military dictatorship. And that happened time after time after time.

So, as a 16-year-old, I saw the contrast between a nation where citizens had no voice in the future of their country versus the United States of America, where the foundation of our Republic, the core vision of our Nation is that each citizen has the opportunity to participate, to fight to help shape the American dream, the path into the future, to the benefit of a better nation.

President Johnson noted that the ballot box is so essential that "the vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised . . . for breaking down injustice." Really, that ballot box is the pulsating heart of our democracy.

President Lincoln, when he was speaking at Gettysburg—speaking that the soldiers who died there did not die in vain because they fought to preserve the vision of government of, by, and for the people, that it shall not perish from this Earth. Well, it is the vote that preserves the vision of government of, by, and for the people. It is free access to the ballot box.

Over the course of our history, we have sought to fulfill that vision through the 13th and 14th Amendments, through the 15th Amendment, through the Voting Rights Act of 1965. But here we find, at this moment in our history, the right to vote is under attack once again. Some 18 States have passed some 30 laws trying to target specific groups of individuals and prevent them from being able to vote. These strategies in State after State are to make it harder to vote and easier to cheat.

Well, I will tell you what this bill does that we are talking about today, the Freedom to Vote bill. It makes it easier to vote and harder to cheat. It takes on three key forms of corruption that are haunting our election system.

First, it takes on dark money—dark money unleashed by Citizens United that allows billionaires to buy elections around this country.

Do a poll of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents and ask "Should we have this dark money, source unknown, haunting our election system, producing all of those attack ads, and you have no idea where they came from?" and citizens of every political stripe will say "Absolutely not."

Dark money, the hidden manipulation of the elections by the powerful—buying these vast sets of television ads, trying to destroy the character of candidates in order to manipulate the outcome—should not exist. It is in the DNA of Americans that this is a corrupting force. Well, this bill takes on the dark money.

The second thing that it takes on is gerrymandering. Gerrymandering is where districts are drawn to favor one political party over the other. Ask Americans across this country “Is it right that politicians should choose their voters rather than voters choosing their politicians?” and they will say “No.” Ask if they believe in the vision of equal representation as a key to a just society, and they will say yes. They want equal representation. Republicans say yes. Democrats say yes. Independents say yes.

This bill takes on gerrymandering and puts an end to it with national standards for redistricting.

Now, let’s turn to the ballot box. I never thought I would live to see the day that we go into a time machine and return to before 1965, in which one of the two parties is determined to block targeted groups from voting—to target Black Americans from voting, Hispanic Americans from voting, low-income Americans from voting, college students from voting. This is completely un-American. This is racist. It is a past that we had proudly put behind us, but this bigoted past has arisen to haunt us once again in these some 30 laws in some 18 States, targeting specific groups of Americans.

This bill says that strategy of cheating on election day by trying to block targeted groups from voting will not stand. We will make it easier to register. That is what this bill does. We will make it easier to vote before election day to undermine those election-day shenanigans. We will have 15 days of early voting. We will have the opportunity for voting by mail. We will make sure that our I.D. laws are not used in a fashion to favor one party over the other. These are core protections against these strategies designed to disenfranchise Americans and manipulate the outcome of elections.

I will tell you what else this law does. It takes on election subversion. We have seen strategies of election subversion in many of those State laws. So this bill says: You know what. No, you cannot have frivolous challenges where one person stands at a poll and challenges the legitimacy of every single person who comes into that poll place in order to make it hard for people in a certain location to vote.

It protects election officials from improper removal. It protects election workers from intimidation and harassment. It preserves election records so they cannot be manipulated. It guarantees that we have paper ballots that can be recounted. It prevents observer interference in the elections. It makes sure that people in line, if something

terrible should happen and those lines are long, will still be able to have access to water and food, which is a strategy that has been now employed by several States, to say: You know what. On election day, we are going to make sure targeted precincts have long lines, and then we are going to say you can’t even get a sip of water from a friend in that line, in order to try to stop people from voting.

Wow—the lengths these Republican house, statehouse, and State senators and Governors are going to stop people from voting. We have seen the strategies in the past. We have seen eliminating the number of precinct voting locations to make it harder for targeted areas to vote. We have seen locating them in new locations to confuse people. We have seen false information put out about where the locations are to make it harder to vote. We have seen the understaffing of key places to create long lines. Well, early voting, vote-by-mail, and protections in this bill stop these efforts to cheat in elections across our country.

So we are defending that most powerful instrument ever devised by human beings for breaking down injustice with this Freedom to Vote bill. We are defending the right of every American to cast a ballot. We are fighting against the big three corruptions infesting, if you will, our election system across the country. This should be passed 100 to 0.

I invite my Republican colleagues to remember the oath they took to the Constitution and to remember that the right to vote is at the very heart of that Constitution and join us in these core protections and to pass the Freedom to Vote Act on the floor of the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. WARNOCK. Mr. President, I am proud to stand on the Senate floor today with my colleagues Senator KLOBUCHAR and Senator MERKLEY in support of the new Freedom to Vote Act that we just introduced. I want to talk about why it is so important, so urgent that Congress act right now to protect the sacred right to vote that is under assault across our Nation, but first I want to thank my friends who worked with me to get us to this point: Senator KLOBUCHAR, who has worked on this issue for so long; Senator MERKLEY also; Senator MANCHIN; and Senators SCHUMER, PADILLA, KAINE, KING, and TESTER. Our work is a testament to Democrats’ commitment to protecting access to the ballot box for every eligible voter.

I think it is important to remind us that we were blocked from debating this issue in June. It bears repeating so that the American people understand that that is what got stopped in June—not the actual bill but the ability to debate the bill on the Senate floor. But I am proud that our group was able to come together. We decided that we were not about to let this fight to protect voting rights die in this Congress.

Passing voting rights is the most important thing we can do in this Congress because if we are going to lengthen and strengthen the cords of our democracy, that won’t just happen. We will have to work for it. We will have to fight for it. We will have to stand up for it. And that is what we intend to do.

That is why we worked on this bill through the negotiations on the bipartisan infrastructure deal. That work is very important. I have often said regarding our infrastructure work that America needs a home improvement project; that that work is not only an infrastructure bill, it is a jobs bill desperately needed. We have to build back better and create infrastructure so that families can thrive, so that workers can be engaged in the work that grows our economy, creates more jobs. But even while that work was going forward during the August recess, we were focused on writing this bill.

The Freedom to Vote Act will improve access to the ballot for all eligible Americans by setting national standards for absentee voting, early voting, and in-person voting. It will make sure that the drop box is available for workers. It will enable the work that is so necessary to strengthen our democracy.

This bill will end partisan gerrymandering—yet another way in which the voices of ordinary people are squeezed out of their democracy—and it will advance commonsense reforms to secure our elections.

I am especially proud that this bill specifically addresses the wave of voter suppression laws we have seen take root in my home State of Georgia and all across this country since January. What kind of Congress would we be if we did not respond to all of these voter suppression bills that are mushrooming all over the country; a violent insurrection on this very Capitol, driven by the Big Lie, metastasized into a kind of voter suppression cancer all across the body politic?

This is our moment, and this is the work that we must do. So I am proud that this bill includes provisions from my Preventing Election Subversion Act that will prevent what we are seeing in places like Fulton County, GA, right now, where partisan actors will interfere with the work of local officials, taking over the election, subverting the will of the people even while the votes are still being cast.

It will also prevent a neighbor from leveraging baseless challenges to a voter’s ability to cast a ballot and have it counted. Imagine that. And that is one of the provisions in SB 202 down in Georgia. Your neighbor can decide to challenge countless numbers of people and their right and legitimacy in casting their ballots—tie up the whole system with these kinds of baseless accusations. How will it be possible to certify any election?

Simply put, the Freedom to Vote Act is all about securing our elections and

making the ballot box accessible so that every eligible American can exercise that basic right, the right to vote, no matter where they live.

As we do this work, as challenging as it is, as disappointing as it was to have our beloved colleagues on the other side of the aisle block debate, I am not discouraged in this moment. I am encouraged by the voices and the legacy of those who committed to the idea of freedom.

John Lewis was my parishioner, and although he has transitioned to eternity, his advice still echoes in the Halls of this Congress.

Every Member of this Chamber ought to be able to get behind voting rights. It is the only reason we are here in the first place. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will cosponsor and support the Freedom to Vote Act.

I look forward to talking with Democrats and Republicans about how we can get this done while we continue working on economic and infrastructure packages, because we have to walk and chew gum at the same time. We have to repair our country's infrastructure, but we also have to protect and repair the infrastructure of our democracy. It is not either/or; it is both/and.

We have always had infrastructure. We have always had roads and streets—important. We have always had bridges. John Lewis walked across a bridge in order to repair the infrastructure of our democracy, a bridge to the future.

I know that some of my friends on the other side of the aisle are already saying that they are not going to support this bill, but in the past, I remind them, voting rights legislation has passed out of this Chamber with strong bipartisan support.

I hope that this day will be no different. I say, at least give this bill a chance. Come, let us reason together. Let's talk about it. Let's have the voting rights discussion that we didn't have in June. It is not too late. Let's have the discussion that the American people deserve. Let's have an open debate and input from both sides here on the floor of the U.S. Senate. That is why we were sent here.

There is a lot for my Republican friends to like in this bill. My Democratic colleagues and I stand ready to hear what you don't like. Together, we can try to find common ground. I hope my Republican friends will give this bill fair consideration and that we can get bipartisan support to get it over the finish line.

Mr. President, as I close, I want to remind all of us that the only reason we are here in this Chamber at all is because somebody voted for us. Voting rights is not just some other issue alongside other issues. It gets to the heart of who we are in the first place—a democracy. We will always disagree about a whole range of issues, but after politicians have argued their case about infrastructure, about taxes, about healthcare, about national secu-

rity, the most powerful words ever uttered in a democracy are “the people have spoken.” Shame on us if we allow the people's voices to be silenced in this Chamber.

Voting rights are preservative of all other rights, and right now the right to vote is under attack. Our democracy is in a 9–1–1 emergency, and we must act now.

I know that for those who have been in this body for a while, there is a sense in which you know you offer up proposals and they don't always make it and you live and you fight another day.

When I look at what is going on across our country, I think that if we don't address what is happening right now, we will cross a Rubicon that imperils our democracy for years to come.

I am not about to sit here silently and allow that to happen. Too many people died. Too much blood was shed. Too many sacrifices were made. Too much is at stake, and it is beneath the legacy of the greatest deliberative body on the planet to refuse to even have a debate about voting rights.

I hope that my beloved colleagues on the other side of the aisle will come and reason together. Let's pass this out of this Chamber with strong support. We got some things done this year, but I believe that if we don't pass voting rights, history will rightly judge us harshly.

Folks who sent us here are counting on us. History is waiting on us. Our children are watching us. And the great cloud of witnesses—John Lewis; a white woman named Viola Liuzzo, who died fighting for voting rights; Abraham Joshua Heschel; Medgar Evers—a great cloud of witnesses are urging us on to march toward the mark of the High Calling, the High Calling about our democratic ideals, a nation where every voice is heard and every vote counts.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I am very proud to stand with my colleagues on the floor to talk about the Freedom to Vote Act. I was proud to work with my colleagues over many months—really, my purpose beginning in May—to help negotiate the bill to a place where it could do what needs to be done to accomplish the objectives my colleagues have described so well.

I want to offer just a few words from the heart about why I am so impassioned about getting this bill done. By my count, there have been 1,994 people who have served in the U.S. Senate—1,994.

One hundred of us share a unique experience. One hundred of us were here on the only day in the history of this body when we were attacked by violent insurrectionists attempting to disrupt the peaceful transfer of power. So from whatever State we represent or whatever our background, we are unified in having shared an experience never to

be imagined, never to be forgotten, and never to be repeated.

I believe the fact that we shared this experience together with the Senate staff who were here with us, this puts a unique responsibility on our shoulders.

First, let's understand what that day was about, that there are some who are trying to kind of downplay it—it was tourists visiting. We can laugh that off because we know that wasn't the case. There are others who are trying to downplay it in other ways—it was a riot, it was a protest, even that it was a violent protest. That is not what it was.

If it had happened on January 5, it would have been a violent protest. If it had happened on January 7, it would have been a violent protest. But it didn't happen on January 5. It didn't happen on January 7. It happened on a day established by law, at a time established by law, for a purpose established by law to disrupt that purpose.

It was a violent protest organized and inflamed by a President to occur at precisely the moment that the Congress of the United States was carrying out the constitutional duty to certify the election of Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS as President and Vice President of the United States.

It was designed to disrupt that certification, and it succeeded. For 5 or 6 hours, we were locked out of the Chamber while the rampagers tried to stop the certification of the election. We were barricaded in the midst of the peak of the COVID pandemic side by side with staff in a room as the insurrectionists tried to disrupt the peaceful transfer of power.

Those words “peaceful transfer of power,” “disrupting,” what does that mean?

Let's unpack it further. It was an effort to disenfranchise more than 80 million people in this country who had voted for Joe Biden and KAMALA HARRIS. It was the single largest effort to disenfranchise voters in the history of the United States. That is what happened as we were barricaded first in this building.

And how glad I am that you pages were not here. How glad I am I told my staff not to come to work that day. No one should have had to experience that. But it was an effort that succeeded for a period of hours to disenfranchise more than 80 million people.

Here is a powerful story. On that day, we knew who had been elected President and Vice President. We knew what the House majority would be, but we did not know what the Senate majority would be. The Senate majority wasn't clear in November, and it wasn't clear in December, and it wasn't even clear on January 5, when my colleague who just spoke, from Georgia, had his race called that he had won a special election in Georgia. As we were under attack, it was still in doubt as to who would be the majority party in the U.S. Senate.

As we were barricaded for hours in the midst of COVID in a room, side by

side with television monitors showing us what was happening at the Capitol, there then came a breaking news report that the last Senate race had been called in Georgia for JON OSSOFF, and so Democrats would now have a Senate majority.

I am a religious person. Things happen for a reason. It was unclear who would be the leadership in the Senate. But in the midst of a pandemic that had unnecessarily killed 600,000 Americans, and now with an ongoing attack against the Capitol of the United States—unique in American history—by people trying to disenfranchise 80 million people, the news suddenly came: We want new leadership. We need new leadership.

There is a reason for that. There is a reason that it happened in the middle of this attack. We have a burden on our shoulders to live up to the responsibility that we—100—uniquely share. That responsibility is to make sure that no voter—not 80 million, not 10 million, not a million, not 10, not 1—that no voter is disenfranchised in this country.

That is why we have been given this unique opportunity to lead at this moment in time. That is what being victimized by that attack means in terms of our responsibility to this country and to our history. We have to carry out that responsibility.

Now, if this were a Hollywood film, what would happen is the Democrats get the majority, and then all of a sudden we put to rest disenfranchisement—Democratic majority, we can stop the disenfranchisement of voters.

But, no, the Big Lie didn't stop. The Big Lie didn't stop when we found out we had the majority. And this is often the case in powerful stories in human history. Like, you know, when Moses leads folks through the Red Sea to the other side, it is not all great as soon as they get there. They still have work to do.

We got the majority, but we have work to do because in State after State after State, as my colleagues indicated, legislators in States where there are Republican Governors and Republican legislative Houses have thrown up one burden after the next to disenfranchise people, just as there was an effort to disenfranchise 80 million on January 6.

Let me be clear. These State legislators, they may not be wearing "Camp Auschwitz" T-shirts. They may not be carrying Confederate flags around. They may not be beating up police officers with flag poles or fence rails, but they are acting out of the same Big Lie that President Trump repeated ad nauseam when he encouraged people to come and be wild at the U.S. Capitol to overturn the peaceful transfer of power.

And so the States are embracing these strategies so well described by my colleagues to make it harder for people to vote, to enable partisan politicians to take the power to count

votes away from electoral officials if they don't like what that count would show, to even criminalize people who are trying to help their neighbors vote.

Imagine this: making it a crime to give somebody water as they are waiting to vote, a crime punishable by up to a \$1,000 fine, by up to a year in jail. This is the same Big Lie tactic that led to the attack on this body, and it is happening all over this country. There is a burden uniquely on our shoulders, if we were paying attention on January 6, to stand boldly to stop it and to stop it once and for all.

That is what the Freedom to Vote Act is about. It is about ensuring that these mass efforts of disenfranchisement, which reached their most vivid and flowering in the violent attack on our Capitol, don't occur and that people have the ability to get access to a ballot and to have confidence that their ballots will be counted with integrity and that weird schemes and stunts and penalties and criminal punishment won't be thrown in their paths by one high hurdle after the next to keep them from participating in a democracy that we proudly proclaim ourselves to be. That is why I am so proud to be one of the cosponsors of this bill with my colleagues.

I was a civil rights lawyer for 17 years. You might think that is why I like this bill. No. The thing that makes me passionate about the bill is I was an eyewitness to the biggest disenfranchisement effort in the history of the United States, and I don't think we can say: Yes, we were here, and we were eyewitnesses to it. It happened to us and the people we care about, but there is nothing we can do.

We can't say, after having seen what we have seen and done what we have done and been where we have been, that there is nothing we can do. We can't. We have to act.

Let me just conclude and say this: I have been on 10 ballots and been sworn into office many times as a city councilman, as a mayor, as a Lieutenant Governor, as a Governor, and as a U.S. Senator. When you get sworn in, you always say some version of this—it varies slightly in local and State office, as the Presiding Officer knows, who was also a mayor and a Governor, and it also has some version of this within it—a pledge to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

I had an epiphany in the days after January 6, and the epiphany was this: When I would take that oath of office, it was just kind of like the thing you would say so you could do your job. If you had asked me, "Hey, Senator Kaine," or "Hey, Governor Kaine," or "Hey, Councilman Kaine, what is your job?" I would have given you a job description, and the job description would have been that I want to build schools; that I want to make sure that our troops have the resources they need to keep our country safe. I mean,

I always had a job description in my mind. I have been in elected office for 27 years now. I have always had a job description in my mind: education, healthcare, defense—the next thing on my "to do" list. I always had a job description in my mind.

Never did I think, until after January 6, that my oath of office was my job description. We say that oath of office, and we sometimes don't think about it. No. That oath of office is my job description, and I am kind of sorry that it took me 27 years to figure that out: to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Those who would disenfranchise 80 million or those who would disenfranchise 1 are domestic enemies of the Constitution of the United States.

I have pledged to support and defend that Constitution. This bill—the debate that we will have and the vote that we will have—is a test of whether we mean what we say. I so look forward to engaging in this most important debate with my colleagues in the days to come.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, before I begin, I ask unanimous consent to deliver a portion of my remarks in Spanish.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, in Spanish, we say "en Espanol," but I know the Presiding Officer knew that from Colorado.

I rise today, as we mark the beginning of Hispanic Heritage Month, to reflect on a historic leader whose work inspires me in this fight for voting rights and the work that we have before us.

Willie Velasquez, recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, dedicated his life to improving the freedom to vote in Latino communities.

Everywhere he went, he brought a simple motto. You might have heard it.

(English translation of the statement made in Spanish is as follows:)

"Your vote is your voice."

Willie Velasquez was born in 1944 and grew up in a Latino community in Texas which suffered from the harms of segregation, redlining, and government neglect. He understood that the path to greater recognition for Latinos was through participation in our democracy. So Willie set out to make sure Latinos across the Southwest could participate.

In 1974, Willie Velasquez founded his groundbreaking organization, the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project. Through his efforts, Willie helped bring the vote—and a powerful voice—to many Latino communities.

Now, Willie's successes were built on the hard-earned victories of those of past civil rights leaders. Especially critical was Congress's 1975 extension

of the Voting Rights Act—yes, a bipartisan reauthorization of the Federal Voting Rights Act—which established protections for language minorities, like Spanish speakers. In just 10 years, with Willie's and other activists' hard work on the ground, the number of Latinos registered to vote nearly doubled, and in the same 10 years, the number of Latinos holding elected office also nearly doubled.

That is the power of the freedom to vote and the power of what we can do here in the Senate and here in Congress—give every American a voice in our democracy.

Now, in his time, Willie fought to do exactly this, like the generations of Americans of all ages, colors, creeds, and genders who came before him. Their efforts reflect a fundamental truth about our country: We are stronger when more Americans can vote, and we are stronger when all communities have a say in government. But the path to realizing our highest ideals has never been easy. From a convention hall in Seneca Falls to a bridge in Selma, from Willie's home in San Antonio, TX, to this very Chamber, the voting rights' victories of each generation have been hard-fought and hard-won, and it is no different today.

In recent months, we have seen the latest challenge to the core of our democracy: scores of new laws proposed by Republican State legislatures to target the past five decades of gains in voting rights; cynical politicians, spreading false claims of voter fraud because they fear losing in a fair election. You can see the danger of it even in my home State of California where, just yesterday, we held a recall election. Republicans ran a campaign of disinformation, spreading baseless claims of massive voter fraud before the polls even closed, before they even opened, and long before a single ballot was even counted. It is straight out of Donald Trump's playbook—the same playbook that perpetuated the Big Lie and fueled the domestic terrorism that the world witnessed on January 6.

It is no coincidence that the cynical claims of voter fraud are often targeted at communities of color. In the face of these challenges, we must overcome, together, again. We must renew our collective fight for our democracy. It is up to us. The time is now to get the job done.

It is an honor to lead the Freedom to Vote Act alongside my colleagues Senators KLOBUCHAR, MERKLEY, WARNOCK, MANCHIN, KING, TESTER, and KAINE.

The Freedom to Vote Act will make it easier for all eligible citizens to register to vote and to cast their ballots. This bill will set a baseline of protections for voters across the country, with commonsense, proven reforms that have already been successfully implemented in blue and red States across the country. I urge all of my colleagues to join us and vote to strengthen our democracy.

As the first Latino to represent California in this body, in the U.S. Senate, I am proud to be spending this Hispanic Heritage Month fighting for voting rights because so many of our community's gains have been achieved through political participation and representation. The fight to expand voting rights is, indeed, part of our heritage. It is also a tradition that unites Americans because we have come together, generation after generation, to expand the promise of our democracy for all. Yes, we are strongest when every eligible voter can make their voice heard.

"Your vote is your voice."

(English translation of the statement made in Spanish is as follows:)

"Your vote is your voice."

I yield the floor.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues: Senator PADILLA, with your great experience as secretary of state and how that has assisted us in coming together on this bill; Senator WARNOCK, with the passion and firsthand experience you have in Georgia; Senator KAINE, for an extraordinary speech, wherein we all had to step back and think about our job description: to protect and defend the Constitution. It is not just ours on this side of the aisle; it is also our colleagues' on the other side of the aisle.

We have this special obligation to protect this democracy and to cherish it and to pass it on to the next generation. The way you do that fundamentally is by guaranteeing Americans the freedom to vote. That is all this bill is about—putting in place minimum national standards that we see in so many of our States but that, sadly, right now, are threatened in a number of those States for no other reason except—to quote Reverend Warnock—that some people don't want some people to vote. Our democracy is too important to let that happen.

With that, we are going to end our segment here, and we will be back to discuss this bill more next week.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

### HONORING CORPORAL DAEGAN WILLIAM-TYELER PAGE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a fallen Marine, Cpl Daegan William-Tyler Page. Corporal Page was a son of the heartland, originally from Red Oak, IA, and raised in Omaha, NE. He is one of 13 brave servicemembers who gave his life in service to our country during the evac-

uation of Afghanistan. Just 23 years old when he was killed at the attack at the Kabul airport, he gave his life defending our citizens and our allies as they tried to escape from Afghanistan.

Right after graduating from Millard South High School, Corporal Page joined the Marines and was part of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment. He enjoyed playing hockey, and was an avid sports fan, especially of the Chicago Blackhawks. Corporal Page loved spending time outdoors, hunting, and being in the water. He was a Boy Scout, a good friend to many, and a member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

My prayers are with his parents, Wendy and Craig Adelson and Greg and Jenni Page, as well as his brothers and sister, his grandparents, his girlfriend Jessica Ellison, and his other family members and many friends.

We all owe Corporal Page and his fellow marines a debt of gratitude. He and those he served with rescued countless Americans and allies. They went into the chaos of the withdrawal from Afghanistan to help strangers that they never met—to save lives. There is no doubt in my mind that many lives were saved because of Corporal Page's service, and his sacrifice will not be forgotten.

### NOTICE OF A TIE VOTE UNDER S. RES. 27

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to print the following letter in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE, COMMITTEE ON  
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND  
PENSIONS,

Washington, DC, August 3, 2021.

To the Secretary of the Senate:

PN618, the nomination of David Weil, of Massachusetts, to be Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division, Department of Labor, having been referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, the Committee, with a quorum present, has voted on the nomination as follows—

On the question of reporting the nomination without recommendation, 11 ayes to 11 noes.

In accordance with section 3, paragraph (1)(A) of S. Res. 27 of the 117th Congress, I hereby give notice that the Committee has not reported the nomination because of a tie vote, and ask that this notice be printed in the RECORD pursuant to the resolution.

PATTY MURRAY,  
Chair.

### MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 2747. A bill to expand Americans' access to the ballot box and reduce the influence of big money in politics, and for other purposes.